BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

ACHIEVEBC
BRINGING OUT THE BEST

# NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2007AE0049-000854
June 26, 2007

Ministry of Advanced Education

## ABORIGINAL STRATEGY PROVIDES FUNDING FOR MATH SUPPORT

VANCOUVER – The Province is providing $130,000 to the Pacific Institute for the Mathematical Sciences to help teachers increase math participation of Aboriginal students in First Nations schools, Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell announced today.

"This funding will support a partnership to help Aboriginal students build strong math foundations from kindergarten to Grade 12, reducing the barriers to success at the post-secondary education level," said Coell. "We are creating a supportive education path that will lead to higher learning, and partnerships like this increase participation by making math more relevant and accessible to Aboriginal students."

PIMS created programs in consultation with First Nations schools and the First Nations Education Steering Committee to provide teachers with training and assistance to help students learn math. The program includes a website for remote schools where teachers can exchange ideas, outreach events and forums to bring mathematicians and First Nations educators together and mentoring by students at local universities.

"The support given to PIMS by the Ministry of Advanced Education will lead to a significant expansion of the scope and impact of our partnership with First Nations schools," said Alejandro Adem, deputy director of PIMS and UBC Canada Research Chair. "By tackling the mathematical disadvantages that their students face early on, we seek to nurture the development of a critically important pipeline of Aboriginal undergraduate students in subjects such as science, engineering and computer science."

The program is being expanded to four more First Nations schools in Lytton, Barriere, Bella Bella and Port Alberni following a successful pilot in 2005 at the Sk'elep School of Excellence in Kamloops. PIMS tested students in grades 3 to 6 at the beginning of the pilot to determine basic skill levels. The preliminary test results showed that in one year of the program, mastery of addition and subtraction, multiplication and division, and problem solving improved by an average of over 50 per cent.

"During the pilot program at the Sk'elep School of Excellence in Kamloops, students became more comfortable with basic math skills and were encouraged to take more math courses," said Kamloops-North Thompson MLA Kevin Krueger. "It's important that we give First Nations students the tools they need to pursue post-secondary education, and I'm thrilled to see this program being expanded to include Barriere."

-more-

PIMS is an international mathematical centre founded by the five main universities in Western Canada – the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, University of Calgary and the University of Alberta. The organization promotes mathematics through research, education and training, and links within Canada and with organizations in other countries, focusing on the nations of the Pacific Rim. More information is available at their website, www.pims.math.ca/.

"I am delighted by the partnership between the Pacific Institute for the Mathematical Sciences and the Ministry of Advanced Education," said Christa Williams, executive director of the First Nations Education Steering Committee. "The achievements made by PIMS and First Nations schools over the past two years were very exciting, and FNESC is eagerly anticipating even greater success with the investment from the Ministry of Advanced Education."

In April, Premier Gordon Campbell announced the Province's $65-million Aboriginal post-secondary strategy to meet the higher learning commitments in the Transformative Change Accord and close the gap in the area of education opportunities between First Nations and other British Columbians. The strategy helps meet that commitment by focusing efforts and working collaboratively to improve the quality of life of Aboriginal people in B.C. over the next 10 years.

-30-

Media contact: Corinna Filion
Communications Manager
250 952-6400
250 812-7977 (cell)

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.